Interview with Inger F. Sheinbaum

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

INGER F. SHEINBAUM

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Q: Inger, could you tell us about where you were born and how you got into the Foreign Service?

SHEINBAUM: I was born in 1949 in Copenhagen, Denmark to a mother and father and two, quite a bit older, brothers, 11 and 15 years older than myself. So I grew up as the very youngest of the three, which in effect meant that I grew up as a single child for most of my childhood. And I think I had a very privileged position. Everybody used to tell me “you poor child, you have older parents.” I think I had a very privileged position. It was certainly not a handicap, either then or later in life as I look back on it.

I came to the United States at the age of 15 as an exchange student. Actually my brother had been here as an exchange student and the family that he had lived with — the daughter of that family invited me to come and spend a year with them in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, which I did, which was definitely one of my main pillars in my life as I see it, and has been my entire life. The culture, the language, the opening at such a young stage — it made a very, very broad impression on me.

Q: How long did you stay in the United States during that period of time?

SHEINBAUM: Exactly one year. I was a junior in high school. That, I would say, led directly to my entering the Foreign Service in the sense that when I, in 1969, was a student nurse at the biggest hospital in Copenhagen, I was asked to look after this American diplomat who had been very badly injured in an automobile accident. I was the only one in the ward at that time who spoke English and they asked me if I could look after him. And I remember turning around to the head nurse saying, “Me? But he's an American.” But, you know this is toward the end of the Vietnam war and Americans were not too terribly popular. But Gil took care of the rest, I forgot about the Vietnam issues. That was in early 1969, and we started going out in June 1969 and were married in 1971 in Copenhagen, actually outside Copenhagen where my mother lived at the time. Gil was at the American embassy and had been there, at that time, for three years. And, so, my having spent a year here I see as a direct linkage to becoming a Foreign Service wife and spouse.

Q: So, after you were married, did you continue on assignment in Copenhagen?

SHEINBAUM: Gil stayed on for another year in order for me to finish my nursing school and then I specialized in psychiatry. And in order to have this specialization time, I stayed behind for another three months after he went back to Washington in 1972.

Q: And then you joined him in Washington.

SHEINBAUM: And then I joined him in October of 1972.

Q: And how was the adjustment for you, coming to live in Washington?

SHEINBAUM: It was very exciting. It was coming back to the States where I had not been for six years. Of course, I had never been to Washington before. As a wife, certainly in a different position, it was very exciting. It was very impressive years that we had. Very nice two years here - actually three years before we went to Madagascar. During those three years, our son Neil was born in 1973 and we did a bit a traveling back to Denmark, back

to Europe, but also within the United States itself. But they were great years, they really were.

Q: Were there any diplomatic requirements as a spouse of you while you were in Washington during that early period?

SHEINBAUM: No requirements. There were quite a bit of social invitations from the Embassies that Gil was dealing with as the Benelux Desk Officer, but there were certainly no requirements. And in most of the cases I remember, we brought Neil in a small basket and he only made one obscene nuisance of himself when he fell out of the basket at the Dutch Ambassador's Tulip Dinner and made a big howl. And that was not very diplomatic.

Q: Did you work during that period that you were assigned to Washington?

SHEINBAUM: No. I was the happy new mother with a baby at home and I did not work. There was no need for it and I'm happy I didn't. I was very happy being at home with Neil.

Q: So then your next assignment was ...

SHEINBAUM: Our next assignment was about a year earlier than we thought we would be going overseas again. Gil was asked in September, 1975, to go to Antananarivo in Madagascar as the Charg# on a very short notice because the former Charg# was killed in an automobile accident in Kenya. and so it was very tragic circumstances that we went out on. We were delighted to go, but it was really very tragic; the whole process of knowing we were replacing a family there that left under those circumstances.

Q: Did you have any training before you went abroad as a spouse, either language training or spouse training or security training or any sort of training?

SHEINBAUM: Absolutely none before we went to Madagascar. I had, before we knew we were assigned to Madagascar, I had joined the FS Wives Course at FSI. I forget if it was a two or three week course. Two weeks. But that was all. But when Gil was assigned to

Madagascar, he was actually asked on a Friday if he could go out in less than two weeks time. And I remember Gil coming home saying “you're not going to believe this but I've been assigned to Madagascar.” And I said “Mada- where?” And he said “they'd like me to go out in two weeks.” I said “No way.” Then we invited Dick and Kay Matheron for dinner that Monday. And he had been DCM in Madagascar. And they spoke very highly of it. And after they left I said “I'm ready to go.” So we actually packed up everything and left within three weeks.

Q: Now, the Wives Seminar, did you have that during those three weeks?

SHEINBAUM: No, no. This was — I had taken that on my own at some convenient time before I had Neil while I was in Washington.

Q: Did that help you at all in this assignment?

SHEINBAUM: No, none whatsoever. I mean, it was really, I would say, unrelated.

Q: And then when you arrived in Antananarivo, was it a shock or was it everything that you expected it to be? Did you feel prepared?

SHEINBAUM: Well, I'll tell you it was maybe my biggest wake-up call in life ever. Because coming out with Gil who was the Charg#, and mind you I'm twenty years younger than my husband, I remember I arrived in jeans and pigtails and we had been on the road for four days because our flights were delayed out of Milan and out of Nairobi. And arriving at that reception line, where everybody had been groomed to the last hair on their heads and here I come with my pigtails and my 26 year old attitudes, I tell you you've never seen anybody visit the local hairdresser so fast or have clothes made so fast because I definitely did not want to look like the last one in the row. It was a wake up call in that sense but it worked. It worked. I worked very hard on it.

Q: So, you worked very hard during that assignment to become a proper Foreign Service spouse?

SHEINBAUM: Yes. To not be an embarrassment.

Q: Now, did you work during that assignment?

SHEINBAUM: I got pregnant immediately after we arrived with our second child and I think that was a quieting down time for me. I mean apart from adjusting to life overseas and as a Foreign Service wife. With Neil who was two on our arrival and then a newborn nine months later, it sort of eased me in in a natural sense I would say. Rather than picking on me I think the other FS wives maybe took a shine to me because I was pregnant. I was neither so much younger nor married to the Charg#. And I think what could have been somewhat jealousy turned out to be helpfulness from that angle.

Q: So were there any requirements on that assignment as the spouse of the Charg# that you had to meet socially or...SHEINBAUM: All the time, nonstop. That's why the airport arrival — I mean that was my awakening, but that was just the beginning of the awakening. I mean, it was nonstop representational. I took, I had French in school before I left Denmark, but my French was definitely not sufficient. I took intensive French.

Q: At post?

SHEINBAUM: At post, yes. And we were totally immersed in social things at home, at other residences. There was a very hostile Malagasy reaction towards the Americans at that time and we very strongly felt that that indirectly led to us leaving there prematurely, Actually the State Department pulled Gil out prematurely as a punishment to the Malagash regime because two of the staff members at the American Embassy had been meeting with college students, Malagasy college students, and that was very negatively looked at by the Malagasy government. And they were PNG'd, and because they were PNG'd Washington's reaction was that they pulled out Gil and waited for a very long time before

sending an Ambassador again. So we actually only stayed at post for a little more than a year which was a very short and very abrupt leaving.

Q: So all of that language training and representation kind of was for naught?

SHEINBAUM: No, it was not for naught. We met some very unique people and I think we had some very unique situations. And it certainly wasn't for nothing, I mean my language came in very handy later on in our FS lives in Geneva when I was working as the Embassy nurse at the Mission to the UN dealing with local Swiss doctors. So that certainly did come in there. And I would say the crack course in learning FS and diplomatic entertainment and seeing people and dealing with people, it all came in handy down the line.

Q: Did you get to see any of the country while you were there?

SHEINBAUM: Very little. Very little. I was pregnant. Gil did quite a bit of traveling for the Embassy. But I did some as soon as Britt was born. I started doing some traveling with him and I did get to see Fort Dauphin and Majunga, both costal areas. And we did some local traveling but I don't know, if you're way up at Antananarivo, it's sort of on the high plateau of the island, forty five hundred feet up, so it's very high and it's quite difficult to travel around the country. But when you do travel around the country, you do see some of the most spectacular things. And I think, looking back on Madagascar that was maybe one of the most impressive places I've ever been in my life.

Q: Scenery?

SHEINBAUM: Scenery, culturally, people wise. It was an incredible island. A lot of French influence, a lot of cultural background and such a mixture of Polynesian/Malaysian/African combination. Very interesting place. Too bad it's so far away.

Q: Were the medical facilities adequate for childbirth?

SHEINBAUM: Definitely not! Definitely not. But I chose to stay and have our second child there. Number one, I'd been through it once — I knew I could do it. But the primary reason was really that I got very ticked off with the American doctor who bombastically came in and said “you must go to South Africa.” I said, “South Africa! Who am I going to stay with in South Africa? Who am I going to lean on?” He said, “never mind.” Then I said, “can I possibly go to Denmark? I got all my family in Denmark.” He said, “Denmark? Medical facilities in Denmark?” At that point I decided, “I'm staying in Madagascar.” And we had Britt. There was no doctor, there was no anesthesia, there was no blood, but there was a wonderful midwife smoking a big cigar all the way through labor and it went fine. And I had royal treatment, and I'm so glad that I didn't go to South Africa. And Britt is now 21 and thinking about a FS career herself. So Madagascar didn't harm her.

Q: So you had two small children and you left Madagascar. Did you come back to Washington?

SHEINBAUM: Yes, we came back to Washington in March 1977, between assignments because there was no other assignment at the time when Gil was asked to leave Madagascar. We came back to Washington and that was definitely very hard to be in a small hotel. One bedroom apartment with two children, one of whom couldn't walk. So after a few months I left for Denmark and stayed with my mother in her very spacious house until Gil was assigned to Malawi in July 1977. And he came through Copenhagen and picked us up and we all went to Malawi.

Q: The trip to Malawi — was it uneventful or routine?

SHEINBAUM: Nothing is ever uneventful in the FS. If you have the eye for the experiences. And you have the eye for the humoristic side, everything is an event. And I suppose one could, as we're doing, write stories about. Arriving in Malawi was very, I should say, American chuckle times in the sense that Hastings Kamuzu Banda, do I dare I say Dictator, who had been the self-appointed President for life many, many years, just

stepped down two years ago — he had a very harsh look at the Americans at the time because of Peace Corps volunteers who he thought had political influence. Because of that, and because of political prisoners, we had slowly withdrawn the Peace Corps. There had been a very large number of Peace Corps volunteers there, in the 1960s. Paul Theroux, the well-known author, was a Peace Corps volunteer and had written stories about Malawi and that was the reason Banda soured on the Peace Corps.. And that made a very tense sort of atmosphere.

Q: So, another country where Americans weren't particularly welcome?

SHEINBAUM: You might say so. They were at least looked upon in a suspicious manner.

Q: Was this another country where you could use your French or not?

SHEINBAUM: No, Malawi is a former British Colony and everybody spoke very, very good English and of course the local dialect. But English was basically spoken almost everywhere. Now in Malawi I started working as the Embassy nurse. Britt, at that time, was one year old and Neil was four. And we had good help at home and it was very easy for me to spend, I think I worked ten hours a week at the Embassy. But I also worked in the local hospital as a volunteer. And I was giving Lamaze classes to whoever, foreign wives in the community who had an interest in that. So I started sort of spreading my wings a little bit in Malawi. The kids were just that much older and I started spreading out.

Q: Were the representational requirements as heavy there as they were in Antananarivo?

SHEINBAUM: No. It was very relaxed.

Q: So that...

SHEINBAUM: Gil was the DCM for a while and then he was the Charg# for nine months and then he was DCM again. It was definitely very relaxed. I mean, yes, there were a lot of

representational requirements, but I mean, nothing that I would say was overwhelming or couldn't be dealt with.

Q: But that may have contributed to your feeling that you could spread your wings and get back into nursing.

SHEINBAUM: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: You said you had good help there. Local? And so the children weren't enrolled in any program at their young ages.

SHEINBAUM: The children, I think a year after we arrived, Neil started kindergarten and Britt started the following year. But there were plenty of small children in the community and there was plenty of things to do. I would say the biggest fears as a mother and as the Embassy nurse and as an Embassy spouse in those years were maybe the health-related problems that we had in Malawi.

Q: For example?

SHEINBAUM: Rabies, snakes, mosquitoes, malaria. We had one instance where the combined Embassy children had been at a birthday party and the birthday child had been given a kitten by somebody else. This kitten had a small rubber ball that the children were playing with. And they were sort of passing the ball from the kitten's mouth to their mouths - nice. The day after the birthday party the mother of the party found the kitten dead. And we had it examined and it had died from rabies. So for the following 16 days I had the children marching through my kitchen for their rabies shots that they had to be given at that time. At the time we didn't have Merieux. We only had the duck embryo which you had to give in the stomach for 16 days. It was a very quick way of becoming totally unpopular.

Q: So how many children were involved?

SHEINBAUM: Sixteen.

Q: Including your own?

SHEINBAUM: Yes, sixteen or eighteen children.

Q: And did all the children come through it all right?

SHEINBAUM: Oh yes. All of them came through. But those were also in the years, it was 1978, when Merieux had just been legalized in Europe. It was not yet in America. It had not passed American standards. But I was, we didn't have fax in those days, we didn't have phones, but I was wiring Washington, begging them to send me Merieux, because I knew from my medical background, that they had it in the State Department And they said, “we can't send it to you because it's not been legalized.” I said, “I have all these children here, send it to me.” Number one, when you inject duck embryo, in anybody, it's very high risk for allergic reactions and many more people die from that reaction than actually from rabies. And I was standing for all these children — it was a tremendous responsibility. The State Department wouldn't give me the Merieux. Six months after all this had settled and the dust had sort of settled, Merieux was liberated and they sent it to me in Malawi. And they said “congratulations Mrs. Sheinbaum, you've been a pest for six months, but here you are.” I then offered the entire Embassy to get pre-exposed vaccination. In other words, should they ever be exposed to rabies again, they have had the vaccination. Only my own family took advantage of it. At that time they had seemingly forgotten. That was about the time that Gil and I left post. When we got to Washington, there was a cable in the Medical Unit, “please check in immediately.” And the cable read, “our Ambassador's dog has died from rabies and everybody has been petting the Ambassador's dog. They're scrambling. I said, “too bad.” My family took the Merieux but nobody else at post wanted it. So that was maybe one of the health hazards. Snakes, of course, were rampant — there were snakes everywhere. And so those hazards, when you have small children, you just have to be very cautious. Allergic reactions. But knowing the medical system inside out, I always

knew where the doctors played poker and I always knew where their girlfriends were and we had a couple of very close calls. When the British High Commissioner in Malawi nearly bled to death, I happened to know where the surgeon was and got him out of his poker game and we saved Michael Scott. But it was a close call.

Q: Were your children otherwise healthy at that post. Did they come out without any other close calls?

SHEINBAUM: Nothing. Nothing. No. The usual minor stuff, but nothing unusual.

Q: To change the subject, was that a post that you were able to get out and around in the countryside?

SHEINBAUM: Definitely. Up country, around country, neighboring countries a lot — with the children.

Q: Was it as scenic as your previous...

SHEINBAUM: It was green, it was lush, but you couldn't even compare it to Madagascar. But it was very pleasant, very nice, and the Embassy had one beach cottage, and one mountain cottage, and we used to go there very often. It was a very pleasant life and very pleasant living. And even if there were some anti-American feelings, it certainly didn't make any dent in our life there.

Q: So you consider that to be another happy assignment?

SHEINBAUM: Definitely. Gil was extremely busy, but he has covered that in his own oral history. He was very busy so he was very fulfilled workwise. And as I told you, I had started spreading out doing my nursing, so we were all very busy.

Q: We like to ask about your feelings about being a foreign-born spouse in the American Foreign Service.

SHEINBAUM: Well, being a foreign-born spouse and at the same time being a much younger spouse, and in most of Gil's job positions, he was the boss, I would say they were all dynamite potentials for jealousies and I definitely felt them. I felt them in a sense that it was a matter for me to strive even harder to be accepted among the other American women. I mean I knew in my heart that I was as good as they were, but it was somehow a matter for me to force myself even more. Which was maybe good that they made me feel that way because it just made me work much harder. And that's no damage. I remember one incident in Malawi at a July 4th reception when Gil was the Charg#, and I was crazily flying all over the residence of the Ambassador to gather flowers and to set up tables and to check on the food and to do this and that. And I think most of the American wives were at the tennis court sort of non-chalantly batting balls back and forth. And one of them yells out “Hey, Inger, you want any help?” And I remember gritting my teeth and thinking, “Not in your sweet life. I'm gonna gather these flowers and set up these cookies and do this thing myself. You could have come to me a couple of days ago if you wanted to be a part of this!” But, that was just a little bit, I think, from their way, in a sense showing me, well, you've married the Charg# and you know you had to do it, go for it. I mean you drink the champagne, you do the work. I mean, that was sort of my interpretation. If anything, I have felt that, it probably just made me a stronger person, that I sort of had to work uphill at a couple of posts because of this particular angle. But I've never been unhappy about it. Jealousy has always peeled off on me, and it's small minded people who have to feel jealous, and I feel sorry for them.

Q: Did you ever have any ambassadors' wives that asked you to do things or is that a thing of that past that is no longer done?

SHEINBAUM: In a few places. But then I was always happy to help out. I never felt that it was an imposition and certainly nobody ever asked me to polish silver or carry the tray. And if they had, I would probably have done it. But, never anything that I could even

recollect. I've met very nice people and very nice ambassadors' wives. I've never felt used or abused.

Q: So then you fulfilled your complete assignment there, and did you go back to Washington or on to another...

SHEINBAUM: We had two years there and home leave. Actually when we left from Madagascar, we never came back to Washington until '91 except for home leaves. We were out for 16 years straight. And that was, maybe, wrong. But that I will tell you about later.

Q: So you went on to the Philippines?

SHEINBAUM: Right. And that was possibly, I would say, all four of us, our favorite post. We had four fantastic years. Filipinos are — there's just nobody like Filipinos. They are warm, they are hospitable, they are fun loving, they're skin deep, but you can't help loving them and they will love you to death, and especially if you are Americans. It's amazing. They must be the last race in the world who put Americans in such high esteem. It was wonderful. We had very good friends there. We did a lot of traveling. Gil, in particular, did a lot of inside the Philippines traveling. And I went with him on many, many, many occasions. The children, at this point, were both in school. We had good help in the house. And I was able to do much more work there in a volunteer capacity, even with a very heavy social schedule at home and out. It was very manageable because we had good help. For the Consulate in Cebu, there were only two other official American families, so we didn't have our own health facilities as we had in Manila. There was no Embassy health unit in Cebu, so there was no way I would get involved with work there except checking their first aid boxes from time to time. But I also much, much preferred getting into volunteer work for the simple reason that if I had gone into any of the large hospitals in Cebu, and they had good hospitals, big hospitals; if I had gone in and asked for a job they would have given me a job at any time without asking for my credentials simply because

of Gil's position. And I didn't want that; I thought it would be very wrong to deprive a local nurse of a job that she needed certain much more than I needed it. And there was plenty for me that I could do.

Through a very, very close friend, Dona Maria Aboitiz, I became involved with not only the psychiatric hospitals, but also with the leprosarium and with the handicapped homes that she was sort of establishing and running. And at one point she asked me to take over her orphanage because she had so many different organizations that she was looking after. She said, “I can use you, you're a nurse. Take care of my orphanage.” So I looked after the Asilo De La Milabrosa which was a big, one hundred children, orphanage. And I did that, and was very happy doing that for 4 years. Running it, administrating it, and more than anything, making sure that the finances for the home were established in a way, that when I left the country, they would still be there and not used for pigs or meals or a new tin roof. I had a very solid base established into a trust fund and they could live off the interest of this trust fund for ever and ever if they only stayed within the limits of 100 children. And that was passed in the laws of their Asilo, that they would only have one hundred children in this hospital — and still have, to this day. It's functioning very well.

Q: You mixed the words hospital and orphanage — was it...

SHEINBAUM: I was also involved with the psychiatric hospital. And my other, I would say my number two thing, apart from the orphanage, was Project Handclasp. Because Cebu is an island and a port, we would have many, many American Navy ships coming in. And always being out there with Gil visiting and entertaining them when they would come in, I soon learned that these ships had something absolutely incredible that they were carrying from America. That they carried with them, excess things from warehouses that they were looking for places to donate to overseas where they were landing. But never quite knowing where these things would go. I mean this could be anything from a ton of woolen sweaters — I mean you really do need woolen sweaters in the Philippines. Or it could be potato salad or it could be crutches. You never knew what it was, but they were always most

interested in people that they could trust so it wouldn't go black market, but so they could reassure people at home where they had gotten it. That it really went to needy places. So I started writing these ships knowing six to eight months in advance when they would come out. I would start writing them and say, “I'm sitting here in Cebu, I'm married to Gil Sheinbaum the Consul, I'm working locally as a volunteer, I'll be happy to take over your Handclasp supplies when you come in, could you tell me what you have?” And we had a couple of real success stories. One time we got a ton of potato salad. Can you imagine how much a ton of potato salad takes up — a lot! Well this potato salad, in five kilo cans, that's huge tin cans — I had it stored in my friend, Dona Maria's warehouse. She had a rattan factory, so she had the infrastructure in the way of trucks and warehouses. I had it stored there, and then a couple of times a week I would open the cans from home, bring a couple of the girls from the house, and go down to the psychiatric hospital, where people were always starving, unmedicated and standing with armed guards watching them as they would gobble down this potato salad. And every piece of the one ton of potato salad was eaten and it came to good use.

Another time they had told me in advance that they had crutches. Would I be interested in crutches? Would we be interested in crutches! We had a leprosarium there, about 25 kilometers north of Cebu where most of the village, I mean, these leprosariums are villages, they're not just hospitals. They're villages where the relatives live, the children live, the patient lives. This whole village practically had been immobile for years and years and years. So I contacted a Dutch nun, Sister Germaine, and asked her if she would be interested in crutches. And, my goodness, I mean I got so many prayers on the way. I said, “but you have to come with me on the helicopter out to the ship Sister Germaine,” because the ship was carrying oil, they couldn't go all the way in. So we had to go out in helicopters. In order to go to the helicopter she had to remove her head gear. This head gear hadn't been removed in public for 50 years. She couldn't do it, she couldn't do it. I said, “too bad Sister Germaine, no crutches, that's up to you. All your people will remain immobile for the rest of their lives.” And she said “never mind, the Lord will

understand." She put on her ear muffs and off we went in the helicopter. And to see a village of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who haven't moved about. You can't believe it. You just can not believe the sight of it. I used to move in and out of this leprosarium very frequently, talking to them and talking to the Dutch sisters, and many times having lunch with them and being with them. But this was definitely out of kindhearted American goodwill, these Handclasp projects, that came to use.

Q: How did these donations get collected and then put on, are they Navy ships?

SHEINBAUM: Yes. From factories, or shops, or stores in America who had, let's say, things they couldn't get rid of, or had no more use for. I mean we would also get some totally ridiculous things, like we would get half a ton of dishwashing powder. I mean, what do you do with it? It went to waste. I had no use for it. I turned it back. Other times, we had medicines. I mean if you get rolls of gauze or band-aids or Q-tips or you name it, it came to fantastic use. Another time we had spare parts from, it must have been a cardiac unit, somewhere in California where they had picked up these things. And I invited all the cardiologists in Cebu. I forget how many there were, but there were many and they were pawing through this like it was Christmas itself because they would find spare parts for whatever instruments they had been lacking for years. It was really multi-using the various things provided. And that was really my main reason for not looking for a job. Because I felt that in my volunteer capacity, I could reach out so much further simply by being exposed to so many people through Gil's job in the Foreign Service, locally, rather thanhaving been a floor nurse in a hospital where I would meet 20 people a day. This I would say, to reach out to many, many more.

Q: Was language a problem for you in the Philippines?

SHEINBAUM: Never. I mean, I picked up some Cebuano. Language was never a problem. English is very widely spoken. And through very dear friends both Chinese, Filipino and Spanish friends, I would say my friends in return for all this, taught me culture that you

could never read in a book. And I always say to my children, I say “languages anybody can learn by heart, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you've become bilingual. But if you can learn the culture, if you dare to feel the culture, if you dare to sink in, then you become bilingual, because you understand what's going on.” And that was really what our Filipino friends, our Spanish friends, our Chinese friends in the Philippines did for us — they adopted us. And we have gone back, almost yearly to visit them because we made such fantastic friends.

Q: I am particularly interested in how you became an honorary citizen of the city of Cebu. Is there a story there?

SHEINBAUM: Well, I think it was my work in a volunteer capacity.

Q: Was that it?

SHEINBAUM: Yes. How did you know that?

Q: You have it written on the profile sheet. Did they have a ceremony or a dinner?

SHEINBAUM: A very big...with the Mayor, the Vice Mayor and all the distinguished visitors, various departments.

Q: And turning back to the children, did they do well in school and were they happy there, were there any health problems there?

SHEINBAUM: None that couldn't be taken care of. I mean the usual coughs and kid stuff. But nothing that couldn't — you have to hear one cute story. When the Pope came to visit in '81, we were out in the reception line and we had brought our children with us. And the Pope came out of his plane and Imelda was there with her little pink umbrella. Everybody was there, cardinals, you name it. And here are these two little blond tots. So when the Pope came down the stairs he saw the children and he reached down to pick up Britt and he kissed her on her head. And she yelled out the loudest child voice, she was four years

old. “Mommy, mommy, I'm never gonna wash my hair again.” (laughter). So Britt always felt that was her Pope. (laughter)

Q: Is there anything else in the Philippines? You said you traveled quite a bit. Were there any negatives?

SHEINBAUM: There were plenty. In a sense that we were in the tail end of the Marcos years and Gil, being who he is, otherwise I wouldn't have married him, he spoke his mind. Unfortunately, some of the written things that he had commented on in his cables to Washington were picked up in Washington and went straight back to Marcos. And that created a very tense situation, and I was quite convinced they would do away with Gil, which they very easily could and are very capable of. He's tall, he stands out in a crowd and he traveled very much. And he always refused to travel with security people. He traveled in and out of Mindanao, he traveled in and out of the very troubled spots. I mean there are trouble spots in the Philippines, and especially in those days. I was very often very afraid that they would do away with him. That was my negative. But I would not put it as a family negative. It was my dealing with it. And there was another period when we had kidnaping threats toward the children. It turned out to be a totally loony person who had been writing these threats. But I just picked up the two children and went to Denmark and came back two months later. And that was the end of that.

Q: But they found out who the person was?

SHEINBAUM: Oh yes. But those are some of the hassles, some of the prices you pay for living overseas. But, again, small prices for the fantastic life you have. There's nothing that can compare with what it was like to live in the Foreign Service. We were very privileged.

Q: Your housing there. Was it a problem to find? Was it satisfactory?

SHEINBAUM: No, it was fantastic. I mean mansions compared to what all of us live in anyplace else at home base.

Q: Was it the same in Malawi, in Madagascar, adequate?

SHEINBAUM: Very, very well. Anybody who would complain over government housing should be ashamed. Because, I am almost certain that very few people would live as well on home base as they live overseas. And the way that the government took care of us, we were very, very privileged.

Q: As part of those sixteen years you were overseas. Did you then go directly to Geneva or did you come back at that point?

SHEINBAUM: We went from the Philippines to Geneva. Directly. We never came back to Washington until '91 except on home leaves. We left the Philippines in '83.

Q: That must have been a shock because Switzerland is so expensive.

SHEINBAUM: It's not the expenses, it's the Swiss people. Far from being among the friendliest people in the world.

Q: They're quite reserved.

SHEINBAUM: You move into, I would probably say, the unfriendliest people in the world. They have it all, but they have nothing. That was a shock! A real shock! I missed my Filipino friends, I missed everything about the Philippines. I mean it was beautiful to be in Geneva and Switzerland and everything about it. It's a gorgeous country, but the people, I nearly died. In order to make up for that I started an aerobic class. At this point, I was working at the U.S. Mission almost full time, running the health unit. And it wasn't just me who was sort of cultural gasping. I found that a lot of the secretaries and other women in the mission were having a hard time. So I started an aerobic school. And twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, I taught aerobics in an international school for whoever wanted to join me from the Mission. Rented a room in a gym, just straight across from the Mission.

And we would go there and sort of knock out our frustrations and talk about these cold Swiss. (laughter)

Q: Was your French adequate for Geneva?

SHEINBAUM: Oh yes. I mean, I worked in very close contact with the Swiss doctors, and Swiss facilities. And they absolutely refuse to speak anything but French.

Q: And were the schools adequate for the children?

SHEINBAUM: Very. There was an international school — College du Leman, and we had three very nice years there.

Q: And the allowances covered everything?

SHEINBAUM: The allowances covered most of that, yes. And we had a better living, I would say, because we both had incomes. And I worked and Gil worked. And I had also, at that point, started doing a lot of medical evacuations on the job, in Geneva. So I was quite often gone. And the only way I could do this was that we had, from the Philippines, we had brought with us, the housekeeper, that had worked with us for four years in the Philippines. And she stayed with us for the three years in Geneva and then continued with us to Sri Lanka. So that was sort of my home angle. I did a lot of medevacuating for the State Department, a lot of the African postings, of course Geneva, and I medevaced them back to the States. We had a string of official visitors from Washington in Geneva. I said Geneva was the biggest pressure cooker I've ever met in the Foreign Service. People worked themselves to death and didn't know what to do about it. Most of them had left spouses at home. They would spend hours and hours and hours in their offices and then they would go out and they would eat and drink until they became sick from that and it would start all over. And I would of course see them in the health unit. I mean, it was pitiful. It was really overworked people who were working for their lives and I saw it when we had the huge delegations coming in. I saw it when we had disarmament, I saw it when we had

WHO [World Health Organization], I saw it when we had the Reagan/Gorbachev visit. It was tremendous for people, the pressures they were put under. I was very often in the detail parties and was working as a medical person to Shultz, to Nancy Reagan for the five days when she was there. And, of course, it was very interesting to see what goes on. But, my God, it's a miracle. It was good years for us. Again, because we both had interesting jobs and we did a lot of traveling in Europe. And it was Foreign Service in a different aspect. I would say I got closer maybe to the official American side in Geneva because we had so many officials coming in. I still see many of them. I remember one night I had been working very late at the Embassy, I forget what was going on, and Gil said, “there's some guy by the name of John. He keeps calling you.” “John, John? What's his last name?” Gil said, “I have no idea, he won't say his last name.” So when the phone calledagain, Gil said “Well, who are you?” “John Tower” “Okay, Okay, Okay,” I said, “Gil, don't ask any questions, but he was a patient.” (laughter) We saw a lot of people. C. Everett Koop every year in May when they had the big WHO meetings. He was a character, I'll never, never, never forget him. And he sort of enjoyed taking me with him to the WHO meetings which were in the beginning year of the AIDS discoveries. And he was interesting, following what was being done, what was being said and sort of being right there next to somebody like C. Everett Koop, seeing him in private, find out what he was like behind that very strong facade. It was very interesting, very interesting.

Q: Nancy Reagan. Do you recall anything in particular about those few days that you spent as her private nurse?

SHEINBAUM: Do you really want to know?

Q: Yes.

SHEINBAUM: Off the record? Or on the record?

Q: Well, on for now, but you know you can decide later.

SHEINBAUM: Okay. Well, I'll give you. She was every bit what you imagine Nancy Reagan was. She was very complex. And you really didn't say anything or get out of line or do anything that could raise any doubt that you would. You tried not to be seen or heard. And I remember one day going up north of Geneva, she was visiting one of the drug rehabilitation centers that she had, in advance, asked if she could see. I mean it was very obvious with Nancy Reagan that it was photo ops, non-stop, from the beginning to the end. And, I mean, I got it so dramatically in one morning when I was to meet her and her personal dresser and her hairdresser. And she spent twenty minutes in the car absolutely screaming and screaming at these people, calling them four-letter words, the most incredible things, because her dresser had forgotten to remind her to put on her wristwatch. And that was the entire conversation. I mean, I have never sat so quietly in my life. I was neither going to be seen nor heard. Whereas he, the President, he was absolutely charming. Whenever we were sitting or standing in the halls waiting, he would come out. Of course, he couldn't remember names or faces, but he would say “Have you had a cup of coffee?” or “Aren't you tired at all? Don't you want to sit down?” He was really nice. Human nice. But she, good grief! I'm glad it was just the five days. It wasn't worth the salary.When I used to see Barbara Bush when she came in with George Bush, she was a delight. Absolute delight. And George Shultz, sweet as could be — very, very, very pleasant human being. Never, never, never gave us a hard time. And we had days and days and days when we worked with them and side by side with them. I mean they had enough opportunity to snap because it was certainly strained. But they never did.

Q: So you were three years in Geneva.

SHEINBAUM: That's right.

Q: And did you come back to Washington before you went out to the Colombo Plan?

SHEINBAUM: Nope. We went straight to Colombo, Sri Lanka, where Gil had been appointed Director of the Colombo Plan. Now that was leaving the Foreign Service.

And that was a wake up call. I had asked Gil to go to Denmark and spend a week at my mother's place with the children while I would go out and set up house because I figured it was easier that they stayed in Denmark, and it was much easier for me to move about in Colombo on my own and to fix up the house, which I did. And that was (laugh)...I realized that when I had left the Foreign Service there was no GSO and there was no backup system and there was no wives club and there was no CLO. Wake up! But I met the nicest person who became a very dear friend to me — Jim Spain — who was the American Ambassador in Colombo. And he didn't know me from anywhere. He knew Gil. But when he had heard that I was coming to town he said, “well, if you don't mind, you know, you're very welcome to, you know, stay in my guest wing because I have this very big residence and it's just me.” His wife had died recently before that. And I couldn't, I could never forget that human kindness. I mean, he didn't have to do that. I was not one of his Embassy responsibilities. But Jim invited me in. And I promised myself at that point that I'm going to repay this favor somehow. I stayed there while they were working on our house because my biggest problem was that the Colombo Plan kept saying, “Master isn't here, can't paint.” “Can't get plumber.” “Can't get electrician.” I said, “Yes, master says can get plumber, can get painter.” I'm here to help so that when he comes he can start work, help me find these people! They wouldn't help me. There was no way they would do it because they didn't know that it was Okay with Gil. And I had no way of finding out how. And I decided, well, I'll pay it all. I'll pay it out of my own funds and then I will get reimbursed once Gil gets in. And I had the house pretty much re-wired, painted, cleaned up, by the time he arrived eight days later. But Jim Spain's and my friendship just grew and grew from there on. His wife had died before he came to Colombo and we used to see a lot of him at home — he became sort of a family member.

And before I left Colombo, I was very concerned about the hospital that I had been administrating and been the Director for five years — if that would sort of go down the drain, and all the work that we put into that, if that would be wasted. So, in the meanwhile, Jim Spain had retired in Colombo and decided to stay out there. So I asked him, “Jim, how

would you like to run my hospital?" He said "I'm not a nurse, I'm not medical." I said, "no, but you were well known in the community and you're well respected and that way I know if something happened to you, they would look after you." And he accepted that, and that was a very good arrangement. But that was sort of the Foreign Service collegial. I mean, obviously, at the time when I arrived, he invited me in because he had known Gil. I mean, it was the Foreign Service family feeling.

Q: Did you really feel so "out on your own" as a detailee to an international organization. Did you feel like you were not part of the State Department? That you didn't have that support system at all?

SHEINBAUM: We were in the sticks. I mean we were way out. Everything that we got from the State Department later was because of my working at the Embassy nurse as a backup.

Q: I see.

SHEINBAUM: We definitely felt the difference between being Foreign Service and International.

Q: And how did the children fare in that regard? Were they school age at that point?

SHEINBAUM: They were school age. Neil was in high school and Britt was in elementary school. And they went to the international school which we were not covered for by the Colombo Plan. That was no problem. I mean the children didn't feel any different. I mean, their group was still the kids in the international school. I don't think they sensed any difference or not being Foreign Service at that point. I don't think that affected them. It was a different experience. It was also a very positive experience. It was a very different experience. We were on an island. We were on our own.

Q: Were there any real concerns about the political situation? Was it dangerous at all?

SHEINBAUM: Oh gosh. Oh yes. I mean, nonstop, nonstop. We had curfews, we had city bombs at times, we had assassinations at times, we had huge scares at times. And, of course, in the hospital that I was administrating as Chairman of the Board of Joseph Fraser Hospital, it was like an assembly line at times. The Minister of Defense, Lalith Athulayh Modali, had been very, very badly injured by a bomb in the Parliament a year or so after we got there. And he required very specialized medicine to absorb from his digestive track because his intestines had basically been blown apart. And at the time, working as a backup at the Embassy, I went to our Agency people, and I asked them if they could help me get medicine for him through Singapore, Bangkok or some of the bigger Embassies which they did. And they had it flown in. And I think, because of that, Lalith survived that assassination attempt. Six months later, all the hospitals in Sri Lanka were declared closed by the JVP — the young Communists — except my hospital. And I never quite could figure out who was keeping a hand over me. And I never quite dared to ask Lalith, because in the back of my mind, I thought that he had something to do with it. It was a “thank you” from the time when I was able to get the medicine for him through our Agency people. At our farewell reception in '91, I went up to Lalith and said, “I think I own you a thank you.” And he said, “No, I owe you a thank you.” And then I knew that he knew that I was asking about my hospital and the mystery was sort of solved for me, not that it mattered. But, we were the only hospital that functioned for six solid weeks in all of Sri Lanka with total warfare going on. We would function for 24 hours, we would do whatever we could in a total assembly line until we were out of anesthesia, antibiotics, dressing, you name it. I mean we would just operate until we had nothing more to be done. But we managed, and we kept open for all those six weeks. Unfortunately, Lalith was killed two years after we left by another assassin. But, it was very tense times, we had city bombings all the time. I remember one morning at 8:30, I think it was March of '90 or '89, I'm not exactly sure, but I was the first one up in the family, which is unusual. Normally Gil is the first one up running with the dog. And I woke up and there was, like the whole house, it was like everything shifted — everything that was in glass, everything that was pictures came crashing down. And I thought “uh oh.” There we went. I was absolutely sure that it

was us. It was not, it was the Minister of, I forget, at that time I think it was the new Minister of Defense who had been assassinated 150 meters from our house. But it was as the crow flies. So, of course, it hit everything in that area. The next thing I see is Neil takes off on his bicycle. I said, “Neil, where are you going?” He said, “I don't know.” And before I could stop my 15 year old, he's gone off on the bicycle. He came back totally ashen white in his face and said, “Mother, there are fingers and legs all over the street, you better go there.” I said, “Neil, you better come home here because this is where you belong.” I mean those were the times. We had curfews very often and I had a red lady bike and they knew me, the soldiers in the street, and nobody ever raised guns or eyebrows at me. Our kids used to go in and out of the house during the curfew. When you're a teenager, you still want to see your friends and you still want to do your thing. And I never felt threatened, never felt threatened by that because I felt, somehow, our Sri Lankan friends were keeping an eye on us. I always felt that my Tamil employees at the hospital would tip me off when they had heard something was happening. And I knew a lot of what was going on as a result. A lot of the people from the Embassy used to comment, drop in on my terrace in the evening and say, “What have you heard?” Because I was totally connected with the local scene much more than I think a lot of the Embassy people were who had to go to Ministerial level. I mean, I was straight on the street level. It was very interesting. But I was never scared, I was never frightened.

Q: Were you pleased, then, to leave that situation for...

SHEINBAUM: No, it never bothered me. I was having great fulfillment from what was doing at the hospital to the point where many of the wives at the Embassy would come and say to me “You know we're absolutely envious of your job there.” And I said, “well I could use many helping hands.” And they would invariably all of them say, “Well how much can you pay us?” And I said, “I don't get paid myself. I get rice and curry for lunch. But you're welcome to come and give me a helping hand.” And they would say, “Sorry.” And I would then see them in the Embassy clinic as the Embassy nurse when they would come in and ask for their tranquilizers or complain about being bored or complain about that their

husbands were spending longer hours in the offices. I mean, my assumption at that point was that they would really rather be bored than work because working as volunteers was beneath them. Where I always felt that as long as I could be useful, and as long as I could do something in the local settings, I was very happy. It didn't matter that I was a volunteer. And I wouldn't say I pitied a lot of these wives I would see, but I certainly felt sorry for them that they weren't more resourceful. There are so many things that can be done all over the world, and particularly in the third world countries. I mean, every talent can be utilized. I realized I was lucky having a medical background, that it was certainly a special niche, I could fit in anywhere. Even if it was working for the local vet, anesthetizing her cats and dogs for the first few months we were there before I got connected with a hospital. But I think in a sense that's why I look back at our Foreign Service life as a very privileged lifestyle because I met so many sensational people. I made so many friendships. Ask Gil. He's furious every time the phone bill comes in. But I mean, you've got to keep up with your friends. I do by phone and write. But we met so many, we saw so much, we traveled so much, and I think we were able to give to the children this absolute openness of cultures and acceptance. Not always liking or totally accepting what's going on, but at least the openness for anything foreign isn't necessarily wrong, it's just a different way of doing things or saying things. And I see it in them. I've often asked them since, now they're 23/24 and 21, I've often asked them, do you feel that it was too much for you to spend so many years overseas? Or do you feel handicapped in anyway? They said, “No. We learned a lot, we saw a lot.” And our daughter who is 21 is talking about Foreign Service. And Neil, who is 24, is in the U.S. Navy and loves being out there. So I certainly think that we had very privileged lives which we could only have had because of the jobs that Gil held in the Foreign Service — we were very lucky.

Q: So, I am interested in finding out about your return to Washington and the re-entry situation that you may have faced after having been overseas for such a long period of time, both you personally and the children.

SHEINBAUM: That was a different kettle of fish. And I would say for the first time in my life, I had culture shock. I felt like an absolute outsider. I'd never had a microwave oven in my life. I've never felt so much of a coward in my life. The first time I ever went into Tysons Corner, I came home crying after 15 minutes because there were all these shops with all these varieties, and all these colors and all these choices. I mean, here I was, I was used to markets or commissaries or home leave from time to time, or care packages from friends and family. And suddenly, all these enormous things, and it was very overwhelming. It was incredibly overwhelming. It took me a long time to sort of surface and find my bearings in Washington. And I think it also, it was much, it was much more of a change than I had imagined. It was everything I knew from years back, had changed so dramatically. I couldn't relate to any of it.

Q: The technology, the traffic?

SHEINBAUM: Everything! We had two very dear friends here, George and Eva McArthur whom Gil had known in Vietnam and whom I had met the year before when we came on home leave. And I stayed with them for the first five weeks. Again Gil remained in Sri Lanka while I came here to set up house, buy a car and get settled. And I stayed with Eva and George, and I think if it hadn't been for Eva and George McArthur, I would probably have packed my suitcase and I'm not sure where I would have gone, but I would have gone somewhere. They adopted me and they are still my family. And their best friends, Haya and Jim Wallace have made the difference in our lives here. I mean here were two couples who didn't really have to. Like Jim Spain, he didn't have to take me in. But Eva and George and Haya and Jim, they adopted us and they took us in. And no matter how silly I sounded, they never laughed, they never brushed me off. They're quite a bit older than I am, but I'm totally indebted to them.

Q: Are they both Foreign Service couples?

SHEINBAUM: Eva worked for Ambassador Bunker in Vietnam and she was his secretary when Gil was his Special Assistant. And George McArthur was a newspaper reporter. And the Wallaces, Jim is also a former newspaper reporter and Haya is his wife and has traveled with him for all the years. So they are Foreign Service types.

Q: And what about the children? That must have been quite a shock for them to come back.

SHEINBAUM: It was a big shock for college-entering Neil who had dreamed about going to American college, but had no idea what American college would be like. I mean, he was just as much a pink elephant as his mother was. And he and I used to have long conversations on the phone from Ithaca, New York and down here about how he felt and how it was. It was very hard. But the hardest part of it was, I think, the people factor. The people factor was always what made the difference to me overseas. I'm a people person. The people factor in Washington was a very harsh atmosphere. It was a very cold atmosphere, except for the two couples I told you about. The people factor here was I felt that people didn't care. I mean, unless you were somebody who could do something for them, move, or woove, or drop dead. I mean, we were nobody. I mean, Okay, it wasn't a matter of being somebody. I mean, I didn't need to be somebody. I feel good enough about being myself. But suddenly I felt we are just tiny, tiny, tiny fractures in this whole thing. We are absolutely alone. I didn't, I mean all my family is in Denmark, I have absolutely none of them here. Gil has two brothers, one in New York, one in Los Angeles that we don't, for geographical reasons, see so often. So we had none, we had absolutely none. I felt, I've never felt lonelier in my life.

Q: Did Neil feel the same way at college?

SHEINBAUM: Identical. And I, in right respect, I probably imposed some of the feelings on him and he probably fed back on me. I mean, we were sort of, we were leaning on each other. Gil, I mean this is still Gil's native country and he had lived here of course his whole

childhood and college years. Even though it was so many years since he had been here also, he didn't have nearly the same feelings that I had. He was much better at settling in and he did very well.

Q: What about your daughter?

SHEINBAUM: And Britt went into second year high school and she had the high school year to kind of ease in. The first day she went to school, she dressed the way she would do in Sri Lanka, sort of European style. The next day she went to school I couldn't recognize her. It was like a chameleon. I said, “Britt, what happened?” “I got to fit in, Mom.” And that was the key word. And she fit in.

Q: So it was instantaneous for her.

SHEINBAUM: No problem. The dog and Gil and Britt were marvelous. But Neil and I really had problems. Really. I mean, to the point it hurt. Neil dropped out of college after a year and he simply, he couldn't find his bearings. And he was in and out of very different things. And then he went to Denmark to go to college for one year. Both kids are bi-lingual. They both speak Danish. Gil speaks Danish as well which made that possible. And so Neil went to Denmark for a year and that was the beginning of his realization of where he wanted to go. And then he came back and he said “I need the discipline, I'm gonna join the U.S. Navy.” And we said “Fine, go for it. It that's what you want, all the better.” He's very happy. He does photography in the Navy and he's advancing and he's very happy and very proud of himself. And after, I would say, about two years, I picked myself up because I realized there wasn't going to be anybody else picking me up. And I had been for a couple of years before that I had been flying with SOS International, the Scandinavian based medical emergency evacuation. And I was doing a lot of traveling in and out of Scandinavia, being the only Scandinavian nurse working for them in the western hemisphere. So I got a lot of the trips coming back. And I would say that probably helped me because I was nearly as much in Scandinavia as I was here. And I had the chance to see what life was like

there for my friends and my relatives and my colleagues. And I realized that this is where I belong. So it sort of, it made me settle. And then in 1994 I started traveling with American handicapped here in the States who need a nurse with several language background who is used to traveling. So that also was sort of building on my Foreign Service years. Language, traveling and nursing. And that's what I do now.

Q: But it took about two years to get over it.

SHEINBAUM: Oh yes, And it hurt, it hurt. It was brutal, it was absolutely brutal. I mean I must have told Gil once a week, “I want to go back to Denmark, I want to go back. Why don't you come with me?” He would say “No, no, because this is where the best opportunity for us is. This is where our Foreign Service colleagues are, this is where we know the most people.” And he was absolutely right. But I'm sure that in those two years he never thought he would hear me admit that. But when I started turning around I, of course told him, “you were right.” That this was the only place for us. And I'm very happy that we stayed in Washington. And I don't ever want to leave Washington again because I basically don't want to have the readjustment period coming back again.

Q: I would just like to say that I think that you and your husband have had a unique partnership in the Foreign Service. I think I consider it to be the “new” Foreign Service where both spouses are extremely flexible and are in and out of the workforce and happy with the Foreign Service the way it is. I think that my impression is that you've been very happy with the life in the Foreign Service and despite some of the hardships, have found it rewarding and feel that it has helped your children as opposed to hurting them and that everything has worked out for the best and I don't think that you would have changed too much about it.

SHEINBAUM: Another thing, I would do all of it all over again with very little moderation. We have been very privileged. We have had fantastic lives.

Q: Okay. Well, with that we will conclude this transcript and hopefully have it back to you in a few weeks for review.

SHEINBAUM: Thank you.

Q: Thank you. *** BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Gilbert H. Sheinbaum

Spouse Entered Service: 12/56Left Service: 6/86 You Entered Service: 8/28/71Left Service: 6/86

Status: Spouse of Retiree

Posts: 1971-72Copenhagen, Denmark 1972-75Washington, DC 1975-77Antananarivo, Madagascar 1977-79Lilongwe, Malawi 1979-83Cebu, Philippines 1983-86Geneva, Switzerland 1986-91Colombo, Sri Lanka (spouse was Director of the Colombo Plan, an internationalorganization)

Spouse's Position: Political Officer; Benelux desk officer, EUR; Charg# d'Affaires, Antananarivo; DCM, Lilongwe; Consul, Cebu; Political Officer, Geneva; Director, Colombo Plan in Sri Lanka (Int. Org.)

Place/Date of birth: Copenhagen, Denmark, March 20, 1949

Maiden Name: Inger Fredebo Thomsen

Parents (Name, Profession):

Aage Einar Thomsen, Headmaster, boys school

Ellen Fredebo Thomsen, housewife

Schools (Prep, University): Exchange student in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, 1964-65

Date/Place of Marriage: August 28, 1971, Skibby, Denmark

Children:

Neil, born 8/2/73 in Washington, DC (son)

Britt, born 8/16/76 in Antananarivo (daughter)

Profession: Registered nurse; currently Professional Medical Escort

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:A. At Post: Lilongwe - Embassy nurse (paid); Cebu - Administrator of orphanage (unpaid); Geneva - U.S. Mission nurse (paid); Colombo - Chairman of the Board, Joseph Fraser Hospital (unpaid); Backup nurse, U.S. Embassy (paid).

B. In Washington, DC: Assistant Coordinator, Lifeline Project, Arlington Hospital; 1990 - present Professional Medical Escort, SOS International, Copenhagen; 1994 - present - Escort for handicapped travelers; 1995 - present - Nurse for private patients.

Honors (Scholastic, FS): Honorary Citizen of city of Cebu, Philippines

End of interview